

No-fault insurance plans face opposition by lobbyists

By Associated Press
No-fault insurance plans, already law in seven states and being considered in 27 state legislatures from California to Rhode Island, are facing stiff opposition from a well-organized and well-financed lawyers' lobby.

In some states, the lawyers are being aided by insurance companies and civil rights groups. Fourteen states defeated no-fault insurance proposals in 1972 legislative sessions, and lawyers specializing in personal injury litigation, especially the American Trial Lawyers Association, are trying to block passage of no-fault legislation in 16 of the 27 states considering such bills, an Associated Press survey showed.

The lawyers' tactics differ from state to state, but Leonard Ring, a spokesman for the American Trial Lawyers Association, said the objection is usually on the same grounds that most no-fault proposals "either eliminate or strictly limit the right of people to recover for disability or pain and suffering that don't have a fixed monetary value."

Ring said the limitations affect both those victims who try to settle claims out of court and those who file suit to recover for damages. Although no-fault plans vary, the concept is similar "reimbursement for auto accident victims from their own insurance companies for bodily injury and lost wages regardless of who was at fault in the accident."

In Illinois, the trial lawyers group spent \$100,000 in an unsuccessful lobbying effort to have the bill killed. But after the no-fault proposal was signed into law Sept. 2, 1971, the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association filed suit. The State Supreme Court recently declared the law unconstitutional on the grounds it discriminates against certain groups of accident victims.

The Hawaii Trial Lawyers Association, an affiliate of the national group, waged a campaign of television and newspaper advertising that some lawmakers say influenced the legislature to table no-fault measures in committee. The Colorado Farm Bureau and a group of independent insurers lobbied heavily against no-fault in the current session of the state's General Assembly, where a bill was killed and fur-

ther study ordered by lawmakers. In Wisconsin, several insurance groups, including the Independent Insurance Agents of Wisconsin and the National Association of Independent Insurers, opposed six no-fault plans introduced in the legislature. Stanley Du Rose, state insurance commissioner, said many of the opponents "see no-fault insurance as an inevitable development in the future."

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FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP)—Light flashes being experienced by astronauts possibly could result in blindness following extended space flights, according to three Colorado State University scientists.

The researchers said the so-called "flicker flashes" were being caused by the passage of highly-charged galactic particles through the retina of the eye.

Drs. John Lett and Kenneth Wheeler of the radiology and radiation biology department, and Dr. Eugene Paulter of the physiology and biophysics department, said their research on the repair mechanism of the DNA molecule, which controls the functions of nearly every body cell, indicates the flashes destroy cells of the retina.

The particles, they said, also pass through other parts of the body and render many cells which are not destroyed incapable of carrying out their normal functions.

This phenomenon is not experienced on earth, they said, because most of the harmful particles never reach the earth's surface. "It appears to us," Wheeler said, "that a man on a round trip to Mars could accumulate enough damage via the 'flicker flash' phenomena during such a voyage that a partial or total impairment of his sight might result later in life."

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